

FMST 600/3 Methods in Film Studies 2000-2001 or, Ways of Writing/Thinking about Film

Monday 13:15- 17:15
FB 250

Instructors: Katie Russell (1st term) and Thomas Waugh (2nd term)

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This is the only mandatory course in the MA in Film Studies. It is designed to help students develop research, writing and presentation skills appropriate to the discipline of film studies. In addition to technical and practical matters, the course is about developing the questions that guide film studies research, and to facilitate an *esprit de corps* within the M.A. class. The screenings and readings will provide the ground for an analysis of the tools and methods of film studies. We will analyse the ways that film history, criticism and textual analysis has been and can be written. We will also explore some of the theories underpinning these methods, and get a sense of the variety of ways of seeing, interpreting and understanding cinema.

The screenings for this course have been chosen to complement the assigned articles, and to provide a chronological survey of film history. One theme that runs throughout the films is that of cities and cinematic discourses of urban space. We will discuss how this theme informs different film practices and critical methods, and it will provide some links between an otherwise diverse corpus of films.

Required Texts

Linda Williams ed., Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film, (Rutgers UP, New Brunswick NJ, 1994).

Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey eds. Screen Histories: A 'Screen' Reader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Recommended Texts

Timothy Corrigan, A Short Guide to Writing About Film, (New York: Longman, 1997).
Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis eds., New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Beyond, (New York: Routledge, 1993)

Additional Readings

All the assigned articles, except those in Viewing Positions and Screen Histories, are on reserve at Webster Library circulation desk. They are also available as a course pack for purchase at the Concordia Bookstore. The books listed above are also on reserve, and should be available at the bookstore. The focus of this class is on the assigned readings, and it is essential that all students come to class prepared to discuss the articles listed for each week.

Syllabus

1. Sept. 11 WHERE IS THE FRIEND'S HOME? Abbas Kiarostami, 1987, 90 mins.

2. Sept. 18 **Interpretation and Analysis**

MARNIE, Alfred Hitchcock, 1964, 129 mins

- (1) David Bordwell, "Rhetoric in Action: Seven Models of Psycho" and "Why Not to Read a Film" in Making Meaning, 224-274.
- (2) Raymond Bellour, "Hitchcock the Enunciator," Camera Obscura no. 2 (Fall 1977), 66-99.

3. Sept. 25 **Reception and Authorship**

ZELIG, Woody Allen, 1983, 79 mins.

- (1) Janet Staiger, "Chameleon in the Film," in Interpreting Films, 196-209.
- (2) Colin McCabe, "The Revenge of the Author," in The Eloquence of the Vulgar (London: BFI, 1999), 33-42
- (3) Robert C. Allen, "From Exhibition to Reception: Reflections on the Audience in Film History," in Screen Histories 13-21

4. Oct. 2 Workshop at Webster Media Center on electronic research techniques.

5. Oct. 16 Field trip to Cinémathèque québécoise 1:15 to 2:00 pm

Cinema and Visual Culture 2:30 to 3:30 (no screening)

- (1) Jonathan Crary, "Modernizing Vision" Viewing Positions 36-58.
- (2) Anne Friedberg, "Cinema and the Postmodern Condition," Viewing Positions 59-86

Introduction to Concordia Film Studies Faculty members and their research projects
(FB 250) 3:45 to 5:15

6. Oct. 23 **New Historiographies of Early Cinema**

SELECTED EARLY CINEMA

- (1) Tom Gunning, "The Aesthetics of Astonishment: Early Film and the (in)credulous Spectator" in Viewing Positions 134-133.
- (2) Constance Balides, "Scenarios of Exposure in the Practice of Everyday Life: Women in the Cinema of Attractions," Screen Histories 63-80.

7. Oct. 30 **Technology, Trauma, Narrative Cinema in the Teens**

THE LONELY VILLA, D.W. Griffith, 1909
THE LONEDALE OPERATOR, D.W. Griffith, 1911 16mm. CCA
THE PERILS OF PAULINE, episodes 1 and 2, 1914

- (1) Ben Singer, "Female Power in the Serial-Queen Melodrama: The Etiology of an Anomaly," in Silent Film, Richard Abel ed., (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers UP: 1996), 163-193.
- (2) Tom Gunning, "Heard Over the Phone: the Lonely Villa and the de Lorde Tradition of the Terrors of Technology," in Screen Histories 216-227

8. Nov. 6 **Weimar Cinema and Historiography**

METROPOLIS, Fritz Lang, 1928

- (1) Miriam Hansen, "Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Transformations of the Public Sphere," Viewing Positions, 134-152.
- (2) Andreas Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine: Fritz Lang's Metropolis," in After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism (Indiana: Indiana UP, 1986), 65-81.

9. Nov. 13 **The City Symphony: Modernity and Urban Spaces**

MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA, Dziga Vertov, 1929, 66 mins.
BERLIN, SYMPHONY OF A CITY, Ruttman, 1927 (excerpts)

- (1) Giuliana Bruno, "Site-Seeing: Architecture and the Moving Image," Wide Angle 19:4 (1997): 8-24
- (2) Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Illuminations, Harry Zohn trans. (Schocken Books 1969), 217-252.

10. Nov. 20 **Hollywood: Industrial Histories**

POSSESSED, Clarence Brown, 1931 71 mins.

- (1) Douglas Gomery, "Writing the History of the American Film Industry: Warner Bros and Sound," in Screen Histories 139-147
- (2) Richard Maltby, "Baby Face, or How Joe Breen Made Barbara Stanwyck Atone for Causing the Wall Street Crash," in Screen Histories 164-183

11. Nov. 27 **Neorealism and French Film Criticism**

VOYAGE IN ITALY, Roberto Rossellini, 1953 75 mins.

- (1) Vivian Sobchack, "Phenomenology and the Film Experience," in Viewing Positions 59-86.
- (2) Amédée Ayfre, "Neo-Realism and Phenomenology," in Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s Jim Hillier ed. (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard UP, 1985): 182-191
- (3) Jacques Rivette, "Letter on Rossellini," in Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s, 192-204

12. Dec. 4 **Japanese Cinema and Cross-cultural criticism**

TOKYO STORY (Yasujiro Ozu 1953)

- (1) Scott Nygren, "Reconsidering Modernism: Japanese Film and the Postmodern Context," Wide Angle Vol 11, no. 3, July 1989, pp. 6-15.
- (2) Darrell William Davis, "In the Postnational Neighbourhood There are No Foreigners (Knock on Wood): Nation as Cine-superstition," in Picturing Japaneseness: Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film. New York: Columbia UP, 1996. 11-36.

13. Tues. Dec. 5 (Makeup day for Oct 9) **Hollywood: Stars and Marketing**

WRITTEN ON THE WIND, Douglas Sirk, 1959

- (1) Barbara Klinger, "Selling Melodrama: Sex, Affluence, and Written on the Wind," in Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture and the Films of Douglas Sirk, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994), pp.36-68.
- (2) Jackie Stacey, "Hollywood Memories," Screen Histories 22-39

Winter Break

14. Jan. 8 (Post) Modern Cities

TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER, Jean-Luc Godard, 1966, 95 min.

- (1) Kristin Ross, "Housekeeping," from Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Cinema (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995)
- (2) David B. Clarke, "Introduction: Previewing the Cinematic City," in The Cinematic City, David B. Clarke ed. (Routledge, 1997), 19-45.

15. Jan. 15 Genre Cities/Nations

RÉJEANNE PADOVANI, Denys Arcand, 1973, 94 min.

- (1) Jim Leach, "The Body Snatchers: Genre and Canadian Cinema," in Barry Keith Grant, ed., Film Genre Reader (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 357-369.
- (2) Rick Altman, "Have genres and genre functions changed over time?" and "What can genres teach us about nations," in Film/Genre (London: BFI, 1999), 179-206.

16. Jan. 22 Documentary Cities

BOMBAY OUR CITY, Anand Patwardhan, 1984.

AU CHIC RESTO POP, Tahani Rached, (excerpt),

- (1) Jane Gaines, "Political Mimesis," in Gaines and Michael Renov, eds., Collecting Visible Evidence (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 84-102.
- (2) Bill Nichols, "The Domain of Documentary," in Representing Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 3-31

17. Jan. 29 Queer Cities

URINAL, John Greyson, 1991, 100 min.

- (1) John Champagne, "Conclusion: On the Uses and Disadvantages of a History of the Other—An Untimely Meditation," in The Ethics of Marginality: A New Approach to Gay Studies (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1995), 129-167, 203-207.
- (2) José Arroyo, "Desire, Death and Identity: The Political Unconscious of 'New Queer Cinema,'" in Joseph Bristow and Angela R. Wilson, eds, Activating Theory: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Politics (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), 70-96.

18. Feb. 5 Postcolonial Cities

GUELWAAR, Ousmane Sembene, 1992, 115 min.

(1) Frederic Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," Social Text, Fall 1986, 65-88.

(2) Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,'" In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures (London: Verso, 1992), 95-122

19. Feb. 12 Cities in Heat, or The Bad Girl Feminist Author/And Is She Dead?

ROMANCE, Catherine Breillat, France, 1999.

THE SLUTS AND GODDESSES VIDEO WORKSHOP: OR HOW TO BE A SEX

GODDESS IN 101 EASY STEPS, Annie Sprinkle and Maria Beatty, video 1992.

(1) Judith Mayne, "Paradoxes of Spectatorship," in Viewing Positions, 155-183.

(2) Linda Williams, "A Provoking Agent: The Pornography and Performance Art of Annie Sprinkle," 117-133.

20. Feb. 26 Student Presentations, screenings TBA

21. March 5 Student Presentations, screenings TBA

22. March 12 Student Presentations, screenings TBA

23. March 19 Student Presentations, screenings TBA

24. March 26 Student Presentations, screenings TBA

25. April 2 Student Presentations, screenings TBA

26. April 9 Student Presentations, screenings TBA

Assignments

The written assignments are an important part of the class. Although there are seven items listed below, please note that 3 and 4 are actually the same project at different stages, as are 6 and 7, so there are actually only five different research projects. One of the emphases of the course is on the processes of researching, writing and developing ideas, so it is important that each student keep up with the schedule indicated below. It is strongly recommended that you discuss these projects with me during my office hours; we will also discuss these assignments in greater detail during class time, so if you miss a class you may miss some important guidelines. The co-instructors would also like to see some diversity in the choice of topics over the course of the year. You may well want to orient some of these projects toward one particular area of film studies scholarship, and yet you will get the most out of the assignments if you work on a variety of different topics, films, filmmakers, international cinemas, and periods. Written projects may be submitted in English or in French.

1. Presentation of assigned readings	15 %	
2. Logging of Film Sequence	15 %	Due Oct. 23
3. 1st Term research paper, First draft	10 %	Due Nov. 15
4. 1st Term research paper, Second draft	15 %	Due Dec. 15
5. Book report	15 %	Due Feb. 5
6. 2nd Term presentation	15 %	
7. Final paper	15 %	Due April 16 (4/20 for presenters of last class)

1. Presentation of assigned readings

For each class from weeks 6 to 19 one student will present the assigned readings to the class. As the whole class will have done these readings, the presentation should *not* be a detailed summary of the articles, but an analysis of the methods followed by the authors. A good presentation should outline the goals of each article, the research method employed and the style of writing, and outline the author's main argument. You should follow up on some of the references used in the articles, and discuss the authors' orientation, and the context of the publication; you can compare the articles' methods and conclusions, or compare them to other approaches to the same subject. If you have a critique of the material you are presenting, make sure you fully understand the text. You should evaluate each article in terms of its contribution to the field, and/or suggest its limitations and problems.

You must prepare a handout to accompany your presentation. This should include an outline of your presentation and a bibliography of works cited. It may also include quotations and diagrams where appropriate. Please bring enough copies for the class on the day of your presentation. Maximum: two pages.

Students doing these presentations are *not* expected to preview the screening for the week, as the articles may not be directly related to the film. These presentations will precede the screenings each week, and should last about 45 minutes, including discussion.

2. Logging of a Film Sequence

Length: 2000 words

Due: Oct. 25

This is an exercise in formal and stylistic description of a film scene or sequence. Choose a passage from any film that you find interesting and or/significant for its use of film language. You may want to focus on montage, mise en scene, performance, script, special effects, sound, or any combination of these aspects of film language. The passage should be from 5 to 10 minutes long, and may be a single scene or a series of shots from a narrative, experimental or documentary film. It should have clear ending and beginning points. You should try and develop a thesis regarding the sequence, suggesting why it is interesting to you. What makes it work? What distinctive stylistic features does it demonstrate? What is going on above and beyond the telling of a story? Your essay should include(in any order):

- a) a shot breakdown numbering the shots, describing them, timing them and indicating the soundtrack material.
- b) contextualization of the sequence within the film
- c) analysis of the sequence
- d) an explanation of your analytical method: what have you privileged in your analysis and why
- e) footnotes and bibliography

3. and 4. First Term Research Paper

Length: 2500-3000 words

First draft due: Nov. 15

Second draft due: Dec.15

This paper may be either a study of the production history of a film, or a comparative reception study of any film you choose, preferably not one shown in class. You should collect as broad a range of articles and reviews about the film and develop a thesis regarding its reception and/or production. You must follow a recognizable bibliographical method (either works cited, or footnotes plus bibliography). You should consider the sources of the articles and reviews that you find, the critical goals employed, the historical context(s), the biases and concerns of the writers, etc. This is not an analysis of a film, and therefore you may be wise to work on a lost film. You are not interpreting or evaluating the film, but situating it within a cultural context.

This paper is worth 25% of your final grade, and will be handed in in two stages. The first stage will be marked by a fellow student before being passed on to me. In marking each other's work you should note corrections in bibliographic style, writing mistakes, and suggestions for improvement in terms of structure, organization, presentation, clarity and possible further research. I want to see all marked-up first drafts, with the names of the writer and the marker, by Nov. 22. I will return the papers on Dec. 7, and collect the final versions of the papers in the first class in January.

Please keep in mind that the "first draft" should be as good as a final paper. Part of the exercise is to respond to the criticisms and suggestions of the paper's readers, and to have the opportunity to revise and rewrite. Therefore, by first draft I do not mean rough or unfinished work, but an initial presentation and analysis of your research.

5. Book Report

Due: Feb. 5

Length: 2000 words.

Choose a single-authored Film Studies book published in the last ten years. Try and pick something that is not included in your bibliography for the first term paper and stay away from texts assigned in other classes. (Please stay away from anthologies, as they are more difficult.) The objective is to analyse and evaluate the author's method in the book. E.g. how does he or she use textual analysis; how do they address cultural and historical issues; do they borrow from other disciplines, such as literature, art history, psychology or philosophy? How is the book structured and how would you describe the writing style? Evaluate the book in terms of its contribution to the field. What did you learn from it? What are its limitations and problems?

6. and 7. Second term presentation and final paper

The final paper is due April 16 (presenters on April 9 have extension until April 20) and should be approximately 4000 words.

Presentations should be half a class long (one hour and 30 minutes).

The last 7 weeks of class will be reserved for student presentations. You may show a short film or use clips in your presentation. The final paper will be a development of the presentation, reflecting in-class and instructor feedback, so 30% of your grade will ultimately be based on this topic (consult the instructor immediately after your presentation to receive his suggestions for the final paper). The paper may be a preliminary version of a thesis, if you want. It may be on a single film, or on a director, an issue, a theorist, or a comparative study. The main thing is that you are clear about your method of analysis and research, as well as

your critical goals and concerns. Laser disks and video tapes from Concordia must be booked 3 days in advance, so plan your presentation well in advance. You MUST discuss these presentations with TW beforehand: topic approval must be obtained at least by February 9 and you should discuss your tentative outline with him no less than one week before your presentation date.

Each student must also select one article (not excerpts) to be read by the whole class in preparation for your presentation. Please make sure the article is correctly annotated with author, original source and publication information. This should be done in consultation with me, and should be confirmed and made available by February 16.

Attendance and Participation

There is no grade for attendance and participation, but it is important that you help each other with the presentations. The success of the class depends on the participation of everyone in discussions, and good questions will enable each other to give better presentations. It is likely that you will have seen some of the films before, and you may have read some of the articles in other classes, but that is no reason to skip class. Revision is essential to analysing methods used, as it is often on a second reading or viewing that you are able to gain the necessary critical distance. Borderline grades can be inflected up or down by the co-instructors' estimation of your participation record.

Late work

There are 7 assignments in the class, so it is essential that you keep up with the schedule mapped out in the syllabus. Late work will be penalized, and will be returned late. The co-instructors may not be able to spend as much time on it as work handed in on time. All assignments must be completed to receive credit for the course.